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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HILLAH 000008

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TAGS: [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: FORMER GOVERNOR CLAIMS POPULAR SUPPORT FOR SECTARIAN CONTROL
IN DECLINE

HILLAH 00000008 001 OF 002

Classified by Angus T. Simmons, Team Leader PRT Karbala. REASON:
1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is a PRT Karbala Cable.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Summary: On January 12, PRT Leader and PRT offs met with NGO and politically independent leaders in the REO in al Hillah. They described their activities and the NGO community and stated that popular support for sectarian control of the political process is declining due to the failure of sectarian parties to deliver on promises to rebuild Iraq, and provide essential services and security. End summary.

[1](#)3. (C) On January 12, PRT offs met at the REO in Al Hillah with: Ali Abdul Hussein Kamona (former CPA Governor of Karbala / President of Karbala Citizens), Yousif Talib Mustafa al-Mijid (President of the Noble Council of Karbala), Yusuf Jawad Kadnum Al-Zamili (Director General of the Noble Council of Karbala), and Mohammed Rutha Fath Allah (Human Rights Activist).

[1](#)4. (C) The attendees were all members of a new umbrella NGO, the Noble Council of Karbala. This NGO is registered through GOI in Baghdad. It is a civil society organization independent intended to be independent of sectarian influences. The stated purpose of the NGO is to support the education of rural citizens, especially women, the care of children, and to promote civil society, economic development, and the rule of law. The Iraqis expressed their support for the CF mission in Iraq and their thanks to President Bush. They stated that they have been pursuing these causes independently through their existing NGOs for the past four years without US support. They are interested in QRF support for their activities.

[1](#)5. (C) Our interlocutors stated that many of the NGOs operating in south central Iraq are fronts for various sectarian groups and that some are under the control of foreign governments, including Iran, that seek to exert influence in Iraq. They claimed that inadvertant US financial aid to some NGOs in the past has furthered the cause of these outside influences (they did not offer any specific examples) and are contrary to efforts to establish a secular government in Iraq. The group added that popular support for sectarian control of the political process is declining due to the failure of sectarian parties to deliver on promises to rebuild Iraq, provide essential services, and provide security.

[1](#)6. (C) (Sheik) Ali Kamona stated that he had attended a reconciliation conference with the Provincial Governor, a representative of the Dawa party, and representatives of OMS in Karbala and Najaf. The main point of discussion in that engagement was the mass detention of Sadrists in Karbala. He said that Governor Aqeel asked OMS representatives not to press for release of the final 60 detainees. They also discussed OMS ceasing operation of its special (religious) courts, refraining from carrying weapons on the streets of Karbala, and agreeing to

operating procedures for Saderists in the Mosques in Karbala and Najaf. Kamona stated that he advised the governor and the Provincial Council not to be too aggressive to avoid fueling resentment that would undermine efforts to promote peace in the Holy City of Karbala. Asked about the current state of security in Karbala, the Iraqis stated that NGOs can now operate openly in Karbala, although travel remains dangerous.

¶17. (SBU) Asked about the Karbala Governorate's interaction with the tribal sheiks (two of the attendees are tribal sheikhs), the Iraqis stated that the Provincial Council has a functioning tribal issues committee. However, the Governor interacts with the Prime Minister's office of tribal affairs and takes his cues from that office.

¶18. (C) Sheikh Yusuf Jawad Kadhum Al-Zamili states that he is the leader of the Honorable Sadr of Karbala, a group of 25 tribes spread over nine provinces in the south and south central Iraq that provides education to rural women, distributes goods to meet the basic needs for tribal members, and supports economic development.

¶19. (C) Asked about IDPs in Karbala, the Iraqis estimated that there are 12,000 to 20,000 IDPs in Karbala. There are no IDP camps or IDP areas, but IDPs can be found throughout Karbala. The IDPs are from all areas of Iraq and many live in dire poverty. They claim that some women are forced into prostitution to support their families.

¶10. (C) Comment: These NGO representatives echoes statements by civil society members and and secularists we have heard on occasion throughout south-central Iraq. They say security has improved but it is far from perfect. They are concerned that Iranian backed organizations are spreading freely and establishing control over local properties and businesses. But they insist that public support for the religious parties is declining because of their failure to deliver stability and services and the perception that the parties are beholden to Iranian rather than Iraqi interests. While we have heard independents express similar fears concerning Iranian influence, our ability to verify such claims is limited.
SIMMONS